

# Acts 09 - The Conversion of Saul; Saul's Calling, Escape from Damascus, Travel to Jerusalem; Aeneas Healed; Tabitha Raised from the Dead

## II. Outreach in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1—12:25)

### (4) Saul's conversion in Damascus (9:1-31)

- (A) Converted and blinded (9:1-9)
- (B) Filled with the Spirit (9:10-19)
- (C) In Damascus (9:20-22)
- (D) In Jerusalem (9:23-31)

### (5) Extension of Peter's Ministry into Lydda and Joppa (9:32-43)

- (A) Healing of Aeneas in Lydda (9:32-35)
- (B) Raising of Dorcas in Joppa (9:36-43)

## Saul's Preparation Before Conversion

### Birthplace

Saul was likely born a few years after Jesus' birth. Saul's hometown was Tarsus in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. Tarsus was where east met west in both land and sea. This cosmopolitan city, with its Greek culture, universities and autonomous government under Rome, prepared him to sympathize and communicate with all types and classes of people.

### Upbringing

Saul's early environment was significant in God's preparation of His missionary to the Gentiles. Saul was born into a Hebrew family, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was brought up as a Pharisee, meaning he began to study the Scripture by the age of five. At the age of 10, he began to study rabbinic tradition. At the age of 12, he learned a manual trade (tent making). At the age of 13, he had his *bar mitzvah* or his confirmation. At that point, he was sent to Jerusalem to study *at the feet of Gamaliel* (Acts 22:3). He had a sister in Jerusalem and may have even lived with her (23:16). During that time, he would have been supported by his parents.

He was a Roman citizen (16:37-38; 22:25-29) and was therefore from a wealthy family. As a Roman citizen, he would have had three Roman names, but only one is actually known:

*Paulus* or Paul. He learned four languages: Hebrew and Aramaic from the Jewish community, and Greek and Latin from the streets of Tarsus.

#### Personality

Saul had a brilliant mind. He displayed zeal for God through religious tradition. He was passionate and ambitious. He acted on his convictions, and believed people who declared Jesus as the Messiah were heretical and blasphemous. He worked to conform outwardly to all details of the Mosaic Law, unaware at the time that God's Law reveals our inward unrighteousness and need for salvation by grace.

Paul hated this sect, which claimed Jesus was the Messiah, God's Son; Saul saw Him as a man obviously cursed by God. Saul had one aim: to destroy these vile Nazarenes (8:3; 9:13,21; 22:4; 26:10-11). However by God's grace, he became one of them, and eventually one of the church's greatest leaders. To his dying day, Paul grieved over those he formerly persecuted.

He was probably a short man, because he was taken to be Mercury, who was shorter than Jupiter (Acts 14:12). According to 2 Cor 10:10, his bodily presence was weak. His body was marked because of much persecution (Gal 6:17). He did not have any oratory skills, for he had no excellency of speech (1 Cor 2:1-5), his speech was of no account (2 Cor 10:10), and he was rude (untrained) in speech (2 Cor 11:6).

## Acts 9

(4) Saul's conversion in Damascus (9:1-31)

(A) Converted and blinded (9:1-9)

**1 Now Saul, still breathing** threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the **highpriest**,

**1** Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

**1** Meanwhile, still spewing death threats against the Lord's disciples, Saul went to the high priest.

**1** And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

- The events surrounding Saul's conversion are given 3x in Acts: 9:1-19; 22:4-21; 26:10-18

— Apparently Luke wanted the story around Saul's conversion documented thoroughly for Theophilis and others because Paul became a huge player in the growth of the church

— Luke documents how Saul, who relentlessly persecuted the church and murdered Christians, was miraculously changed by God to become the most ardent promoter of Christianity in the 1st century

- "Now Saul" - again a connective, linking up with the previous chapter (8:1-3)

- "...still breathing" - really says, "breathing hard still"; he had motivation behind his commitments; he was really the instigator of the persecution (Cf. 8:1,3)
- Some time had now passed since the death of Stephen, but the zeal of Saul increased with his successes
- "Threatenings" and "slaughter" (murder) was the very breath that Saul breathed
- Since Stephen's martyrdom, Saul had been persecuting Jews who had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah
- "...high priest" - the Jewish high priest's Roman overseers gave the high priest authority to extradite Jews who were strictly religious offenders and had fled outside the Sanhedrin's jurisdiction
- The identity of the high priest depends upon the year that this persecution occurred: if it was 35 AD, it was Caiaphas; if it was 36 AD, it was Jonathan; if it was 37 AD, the high priest was Theophilis
- The high priest at that time was a Sadducee; Paul was a Pharisee. This shows that there was now a political and religious unity against the Jewish believers.

2 and asked for **letters from him** to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to **the Way**, whether **men or women**, he might bring them in shackles to Jerusalem.

2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

2 He asked him for letters to take with him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women belonging to the Way, he might bring them in chains to Jerusalem.

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

- "...letters from him" - Saul requested the high priest to provide him with letters that would allow Saul to legally go into the synagogues in Damascus and arrest Jewish believers, who fled there because of Saul's persecution in Jerusalem

— You won't find the reason or purpose for these "letters" in the Bible, but it is mentioned in 1 Macc 15:15-24. There was an extradition treaty between Damascus and Israel that was in place well before Jesus came onto the scene.

— Many Christians who were scattered due to the persecution of Saul went to Damascus (Cf. 8:3-4), so Saul wanted to go there to arrest and extradite them back to Israel and kill them

— Saul likely believed that he was following in the footsteps of other zealous Israelites who had purged idolatry from Israel (Cf. Moses, Num 25:1-5; Phinehas, Num 25:6-15; Elijah, 1 Kings 18)

- The King of the Nabateans (Aretas IV, 9 BC—40 AD) cooperated with Paul
- "...the Way" - what the church was called before the term "Christian" was first used (Cf. 11:26)
- Used 6x in Acts, speaking of Christians (9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22)
- It was one of the earliest designations of Christianity and appears only in Acts
- The name may go back to Jesus' teaching that He was "the way," and that His way of salvation was a "narrow way" (John 14:6; Matt 7:14)
- "...men or women" - women are mentioned here, as well as 8:3, as targets of Saul's persecution
- In that day and Jewish culture, women were second-class citizens, but the church elevated women into equal standing and value as men, which is evidenced by the fact that Saul twice targeted women in the church
- If women were of no value in the church, Saul would not have wasted his time pursuing and persecuting them

Furthermore, both Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar granted jurisdiction over Jews in foreign cities to the high priest and the Sanhedrin. This authority was not always recognized in every local community outside of Judea, but it was recognized in Damascus. In 26:11, Saul himself said that he got his authority from the chief priests and the Sanhedrin. Having authority over Jewish believers with these letters, he went toward Damascus.

- 3 Now as he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly **a light from heaven** flashed around him;
- 3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;
- 3 As Saul traveled along and was approaching Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him.
- 3** And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:
- "...a light from heaven" - the *Shekinah* Glory of God

- 4 and **he fell to the ground** and heard a voice saying to him, "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**"
- 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**"
- 4 He dropped to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "**Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me?**"

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?**

- "...he fell to the ground" - because the flashing light of Christ's *Shekinah* Glory blinded him

- "...Saul, Saul" - *Shaul, Shaul*, the Hebrew form of his name; *Saulos* was the Greek form. The same Hebrew form of the name is found in the other two accounts of his salvation (22:7; 26:14).

— It is common for God to call a person's name 2x when He is about to give a major revelation (Cf. Gen 22:11; Ex 3:4; 1 Sam 3:10)

- Other passages provide more detail on Saul's blinding vision:

- It took place about midday, when the sun would usually have been shining its brightest (22:6; 26:13)
- What blinded Saul was not the sun, however, but a revelation of Jesus Christ (v17,27; 22:14; 26:16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8)
- He saw the same Person that Stephen saw while Saul witnessed Stephen dying (7:55)
- Jesus spoke to Saul "from heaven," addressing him by his Jewish name and in the language of the Jews (Cf. 26:14)

- "...why are you persecuting Me?" - Jesus asked why Saul was persecuting Him—not His followers, but Himself

— Paul was obviously confused, since he didn't think he was persecuting God, but rather defending God and His laws

— To persecute the Body is to persecute the Head

5 And he said, "Who are You, **Lord?**" And He said, **"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,**

5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, **"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,**

5 He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice said, **"I'm Jesus, whom you are persecuting.**

**5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.**

- "...Lord" - *kurios*, Saul uses this title here in the same way we'd use the term "Sir" today; it was a sign of respect and awe

— Lordship Salvation advocates will point to this and say that Paul recognized Jesus as Lord of his life immediately. This is a huge stretch because Paul isn't even saved yet, so how can he have made Jesus "Lord" of his life?

- "...I am Jesus" - Jesus' self-revelation shocked Saul, who until then had regarded Jesus as a blasphemous pretender to Israel's messianic throne

- From this revelation, Saul discovered that:

- Jesus was God, or at least was with God in heaven

- Although He was in heaven, He was also in some sense also present in His followers whom Saul was persecuting
- Jesus had a mission for him, although he did not know what or how extensive it would be
- "...whom you are persecuting" - Paul was persecuting "the Way" which was Christ's metaphorical body, thus he was persecuting Christ Himself
- Interestingly, Paul would later write about the relationship of the body of Christ (the church) to the Head (Christ) in both Ephesians and Colossians (Cf. 1 Cor 12:13)
- "...kick against the pricks" [KJV] - a common rural metaphor for opposing the inevitable (such as "banging your head against a wall")...the action only hurts the one doing it, not the object of his hostility (Cf. 26:14)
- "Pricks" were sharp sticks used to drive cattle
- Christ spoke to him in the Hebrew tongue (Cf. v4; 22:6-16; 26:14)
- Saul saw as well as heard (v17, v27; 22:14; 26:16)
- Saul never forgave himself (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13)
- Saul was not the first of his family to be saved: "My kinsmen...who also were in Christ before me" (Rom 16)

## 10 Appearances to Paul Ten Appearances to Paul

1. 36 AD - Conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-9; 22:5-11; 26:12-20)
2. 36 AD - Vision of Ananias (Acts 9:10-19; 22:12-16)
3. 37-39 AD - Arabia Revelation (Gal 1)
4. 39 AD - First Vision: Fleeing Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29; 22:15-21; Gal 1:17-20)
5. 39-43 AD - Third Heaven (2 Cor 12:1-4)
6. 50 AD - To Jerusalem by Revelation (Acts 15:1-3; Gal 2:1-2)
7. 51-54 AD - Macedonian Call (Acts 16:6-11)
8. 51-54 AD - Corinthian Vision (Acts 18:9-10)
9. 58 AD - To Witness in Rome (Acts 23:11)
10. 60 AD - Salvation from the Storm (Acts 27:22-26)

6 but get up and enter **the city**, and **it will be told to you what you must do.**"

6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

6 Now get up, go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

**6** And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, **Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.**

- "...the city" - Damascus

- "...it will be told to you what you must do" - go into the city of Damascus as your next step, then wait for further instructions

— God never lays out for us the entire plan...He gives us information on a "need to know" basis. If He laid out His entire plan to us beforehand, we would not have to walk by faith, and without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6).

7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, **hearing the voice** but seeing no one.

7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

7 Meanwhile, the men who were traveling with Saul were standing speechless, for they heard the voice but didn't see anyone.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

- They all fell to the ground when they saw the light (26:14)

- "...hearing the voice" - in 9:7 those who were with Saul heard the voice, but in 22:9 it says that those with him did not hear the voice

— In order to understand that this is not a contradiction, we have to understand the Greek (see note from Fruchtenbaum below)

— In this verse, those with Paul heard noise or sound, but didn't understand what was being said; 22:9 says the negative of the same thing: they did not hear the voice with understanding

— 9:7 is focused on the hearing (of sound); 22:9 is focused on the understanding



## Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

*The Book of Acts, 211*



“According to v7, the men who journeyed with Saul stood speechless. They heard the voice, but saw no one. Some claim that there is a contradiction between Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9, which states: *they heard not the voice*. However, if one understands Greek, there is no contradiction. In 9:7, the word ‘voice’ (*phōnēs*) is used with a genitive. In 22:9, it is used with an accusative. To hear a voice with a genitive simply means ‘to hear a sound,’ but to hear it with an accusative means ‘to hear with understanding.’ The point is that Saul’s travel companions heard something, but they could not understand the words. Only Saul actually understood the articulated words.”

8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

8 When Saul got up off the ground, he couldn't see anything, even though his eyes were open. So his companions took him by the hand and led him into Damascus.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

- The intense light of the Shekinah Glory blinded him temporarily (three days, v9)

- Earlier, he was spiritually blind but had physical sight; now he had spiritual sight, but was physically blind

- Saul means "destroyer"; Paul means "builder"

- Saul intended to enter Damascus like an avenging fury was instead led into the city by the hand, blind and helpless as a child

- This is one of the things that God does in our lives to improve our spiritual eyesight...He takes us to the end of ourselves. He gives us some sort of challenge or inability, makes it clear to us, which forces us to rely solely upon Him.

- But the end product/result of what God does in us through these limitations is very good because we can often see things in ourselves that we were blind to previously

9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

9 For three days he couldn't see, and he didn't eat or drink anything.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

- The fact that Saul was only blinded for three days is an example of God's grace. That is a very short time of physical blindness in order to bring Saul to the point of clear spiritual sight

#### (B) Filled with the Spirit (9:10-19)

**10** Now there was a disciple in Damascus named **Ananias**; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "**Ananias.**" And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

**10** Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "**Ananias.**" And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

**10** Now in Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called out to him in a vision, "**Ananias!**" He answered, "Here I am, Lord."

**10** And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, **Ananias**. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

- "...Ananias" - "Jehovah is gracious"



— A perfect name for a person who assists Saul in his conversion. God took Saul, the great persecutor of Christianity to the point of murder, and by His grace turned him into the greatest proponent of Christianity who ever lived.

- In a separate scene from Saul, the Lord appeared to Ananias and gave instructions to go see Saul in the home of Judas (v11)

— God sovereignly prepared both Ananias (v17) and Saul with revelations of Himself so when He brought them together, they would have no doubt about His personal dealings with them (Cf. Peter and Cornelius, 10:1-23)

11 And the Lord *said* to him, "Get up and go to the **street called Straight**, and inquire at the house of **Judas** for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for **he is praying**,

11 And the Lord *said* to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,

11 The Lord told him, "Get up, go to the street called Straight, and in the home of Judas look for a man from Tarsus named Saul. At this very moment he's praying.

**11** And the Lord said unto him, **Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,**

- God instructed Ananias to minister to Paul at the house of Judas, where Paul was located

- "...street called Straight" - an odd name for a street until you learn that every street in Damascus was crooked/curved; this street was unique because it was "straight"

— Even today, it is one of the main streets running east to west in Damascus. It is divided by Corinthian columns into three avenues: center for footmen, one for eastern traffic, one for western traffic.

- "...Judas" - not Judas Iscariot; a different Judas (it was a common name at the time) whom we know little about

- "...he is praying" - Saul had been "preying" on Christians; now he is "praying" to God

12 **and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."**

12 **and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."**

12 **He has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so he would see again."**

12 **And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.**

- Saul, through a vision, was told by God that Ananias was coming to see him

- Notice how God works: He was working on both sides (through Ananias as well as through Saul). This wasn't a situation where Ananias told Saul that God had told him

something about Saul. God worked simultaneously through both Ananias and Saul (Cf. Cornelius and Peter, Acts 10).

13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many people about this man, how much harm he did to Your **saints** in Jerusalem;

13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem;

13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard many people tell how much evil this man has done to your saints in Jerusalem.

**13** Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

- Ananias wanted to make sure he heard the Lord correctly, since Saul was infamous for harming believers

- Among the many evil deeds Saul admitted to doing (26:10) were imprisoning many saints, and putting many saints to death

- "...saints" - first use of the term in the NT as a reference to believers; it eventually became the most common term for believers in the NT

14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on Your name."

14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

14 He is here with authority from the high priests to put in chains all who call on your name."

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

- Ananias knew of the authority Saul received from the high priest, to arrest and extradite believing Jews

*The Lord's work is revealed through events that overthrow human expectations. Humans calculate the future on the basis of their experience. These calculations leave them unprepared for the appearance of the Over-ruler, who negates human plans and works the unexpected. This is a problem not only for the rejectors of Jesus but also for the church, which is led by the Lord into situations beyond its fathoming. The narrator's sharp sense of God (and the exalted Messiah) as one who surprises appears again in this episode, and the reaction of Ananias (and in 9:26 the Jerusalem disciples) shows that the church, too, has difficulty keeping up with such a God. [Tannehill]*

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a **chosen** instrument of Mine, **to bear My name** before the **Gentiles** and **kings** and the **sons of Israel**;

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

15 But the Lord told him, "Go, because he's my chosen instrument to carry my name to unbelievers, to their kings, and to the descendants of Israel.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

- God doesn't get into a debate about Saul with Ananias...He simply instructs him to "go"

- God told Ananias that the man (Saul) that he was told to minister to was "elected." God had a specific purpose for Saul.

- "...chosen...to bear My name" - notice that God's election is not an election unto salvation, but an election unto service

- "...Gentiles" - this verse spells out Saul's primary calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:11-14; Eph 2:11-3:6; Gal 1:16; 2:7-10)

- While God elected Saul/Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, it was Peter who led the first Gentile to Christ (Acts 10-11). This was because Peter was given the "keys to the kingdom" (Matt 16:19).

- Since Jesus gave Peter the "keys" to open the door to the kingdom, Peter was the one God chose to open the door of salvation to various people-groups (Jews, Samaritans, then Gentiles)

- "...kings" - a secondary mission for Paul was to preach the gospel to kings; this mission will ultimately bring him to Rome

- He will bring testimony to Aretus IV, Herod Agrippa III, and to Caesar Nero

- "...sons of Israel" - throughout Acts, during Paul's missionary journeys, his typical pattern was that he would arrive at a new city and go first to minister to Jews in the synagogue, where he only experienced limited success.

- He would then go to the Gentiles, where his ministry bore great fruit. This would make the Jews jealous, so they would begin persecuting him, which drove him out of town to the next location that God wanted him to visit.

16 for I will show him how much he must suffer in behalf of My name."

16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

16 since I'm going to show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

- Just as Saul caused incredible suffering among Christians before he was saved, God promises here that Paul will himself suffer because of his faith in Christ (Cf. 2 Cor 11:22-33)

- This is a warning that his suffering would cover his whole career

- He had caused suffering among Jewish believers, now that he was a Jewish believer, he will experience suffering

- "...I" - emphatic in Greek; Ananias did not need to fear going to Paul because Jesus Himself would show Saul how much he would suffer

### **Saul's Sight is Restored**

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

17 So Ananias left and went to that house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were traveling, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

**17** And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

- Ananias explained his purpose for coming to Saul: to restore his sight and enable Paul to experience the filling of the Holy Spirit

— His purpose was not to commission Saul, as that came directly from the Lord; Ananias just announced it (22:14-16)

— God's use of Ananias made it clear that Saul was not dependent upon the Twelve, and also that an apostle was not required for bestowing the Spirit

— Ananias confirmed that it was indeed the resurrected Messiah who appeared to him. This qualified Saul to be an apostle in the second category of apostleship

The Holy Spirit filled Saul as he responded to God's Word appropriately. We may infer that Saul's conversion happened on the Damascus road and that he received the baptism of the Spirit at the same time. Notice again the importance of being "filled with (under the control of) the Holy Spirit." This is the first time that Luke wrote about the Spirit coming on someone outside of the land of Israel.

18 And immediately *something* like *fish* scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

18 All at once something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

- God restored Saul's sight, however it seemed his eyes continued to be a problem (22:12-21)

- Healings in the book of Acts are immediate and instantaneous...this is how people knew that the healing was from the hand of God (Cf. 3:7)

- Once Saul gained spiritual insight (he was saved) and regained his physical sight, he was immediately baptized

- Notice the order...he was saved, then he was baptized (Matt 28:19; Acts 8:12,34-39; 10:42-45; 16:14-15; 16:30-34; 18:8). There are no instances anywhere in Acts where an infant was baptized. It's always the same situation: a person is saved by faith in Christ, then is baptized.

### **Paul's Preparation for Ministry (Cf. 22:17-21; Gal 1:15-19)**

19 and he took food and was strengthened. **Now** for several days he was with the disciples who were in Damascus,

19 and he took food and was strengthened. **Now** for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,

19 and after eating some food, he felt strong again. For several days he stayed with the disciples in Damascus.

**19** And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

- After three days, Paul broke his fast (Cf. v9)

- Saul is now living as a guest in the home of Christians that a week ago he was going to arrest and take back to Jerusalem. Now he is depending on them for hospitality, food, and shelter.

(C) In Damascus (9:20-22)

20 and **immediately** he *began* to proclaim Jesus **in the synagogues**, saying, "He is the **Son of God.**"

20 and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

20 He immediately started to preach about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "This is the Son of God."

**20** And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

- "...immediately" - no time for discipleship? Evidently not, at least as far as evangelism goes.

- Saul was (is) a pharisee, who had a very solid knowledge and understanding of Hebrew Bible (OT), which was the only Bible available at that time (no NT books were written yet)
- At this point, Saul finally realized that Hebrew Bible pointed to Jesus Christ
- Before he will write his first epistle, Galatians (49 AD), he will be taken away by God into the Arabian desert for three years to be discipled by God Himself. This is where Paul's doctrinal knowledge came from.
- The fact that Paul was able to take his knowledge of the OT and understand all of a sudden how it pointed to Jesus was a powerful work of the Holy Spirit
- "...in the synagogues" - why does Saul go to the Jews here and not to the Gentiles, since Jesus said in v15 that he would be His instrument to evangelize the Gentiles?
- Because Peter, who had "the keys to the kingdom" had not opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles yet. This happens in Acts 10.
- Luke showed the genuineness of Saul's conversion by showing the radical change it made in him: Saul's letters of authority to arrest Jerusalem believers had been addressed to the synagogues of Damascus (Cf. v2), and it was in those same synagogues that he proclaimed the gospel.
- "...Son of God" - only usage of this Messianic title in Acts; it appears in John's epistles 23x; Paul's epistles 29x; Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi 1x
- This proclamation was the result of Paul being filled with the Holy Spirit (v17)

21 All those hearing *him* continued to be **amazed**, and were saying, "Is this not the one who in Jerusalem destroyed those who **called on this name**, and had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"

21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"

21 Everyone who heard him was astonished and said, "This is the man who harassed those who were calling on Jesus' name in Jerusalem, isn't it? Didn't he come here to bring them in chains to the high priests?"

**21** But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

- "...amazed" - "beside themselves"; the Greek word literally means, "to stand out of oneself"

— It was widely known how destructive and violent Saul's persecution of Jewish believers had been. He had come to Damascus with the intent to do the same thing to Jewish believers there.

- "...called on this name" - the name of Jesus Christ, the only name that can save (4:12; Cf. v22,27,28)

22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding Jews who lived in Damascus by **proving** that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

22 But Saul grew more and more persuasive, and continued to confound the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that this man was the Messiah.

**22** But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

- There was no NT at this point in time, so Saul was preaching Christ strictly from the OT (18:24; Cf. Luke 24:27,44)

- "...proving" - *syμβιβάζω*, to cause a person to unite with one in a conclusion; to come to the same opinion

— Saul was providing evidence from Hebrew Bible for the identity of Christ, and his arguments were so persuasive that he was converting them to his opinion

— Saul's three-year excursion into Arabia to be disciplined and taught by God Himself had not yet happened; Saul was preaching and proving Jesus Christ from the OT based solely on the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit at this point (Cf. 1 John 2:20,27)

(D) In Jerusalem (9:23-31)

**23** When **manydayshad elapsed**, the Jews plotted together to do away with him,

**23** When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him,

**23** After several days had gone by, the Jewish leaders plotted to murder Saul,

**23** And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

- He who was the hunter of Christians is now the hunted of the Jewish religious leaders

- "...many days had elapsed" - the Greek means "a long time"; it was about three years

— This is likely the time (between v22-23) Saul went into Arabia for three years, as described in Gal 1:15-18

— Most scholars believe Paul was converted in 33 or 34 AD, not long after Jesus' ascension; they date his return to Jerusalem in about 37 AD, three years after his conversion (Gal 1:18)

*No one persecutes a man who is ineffective and who obviously does not matter. George Bernard Shaw once said that the biggest compliment you can pay an author is to burn his books. Someone has said, 'A wolf will never attack a painted sheep.' Counterfeit Christianity is always safe. Real Christianity is always in peril. To suffer persecution is to be*

*paid the greatest of compliments because it is the certain proof that men think we really matter.* [Barclay]

24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were also closely watching the **gates** day and night so that they might put him to death;

24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death;

24 but their plot became known to him. They were even watching the gates day and night to murder him,

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

- Somehow, Saul became aware of the Jews' plot against him

- These Jews were watching Saul's movements, noting where he would travel into and out of the city, in order to capture/arrest him and eventually kill him

- "...gates" - these were ordered by the King to be guarded (2 Cor 11:32)

- The conspirators obtained consent to appoint guards at the gates of the city to capture Saul and kill him

25 but his **disciples** took him at night and let him down through *an opening in* the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in* the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

25 but his disciples took him one night and let him down through the city wall by lowering him in a basket.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

- "...disciples" - *mathētēs*, everywhere in Acts this refers to followers of Jesus, except here. Here, it refers to followers of Saul, which indicates that his preaching resulted in people coming to faith in Christ.

- Paul later makes reference to being let down through an opening (window) in the wall later in his writings (2 Cor 11:32-33)

- Very similar situation to how Rahab hid the spies and provided for their escape through her window, as her house was on the wall (Joshua 2:15)

Saul went to Damascus to persecute Christians, and left as a Christian persecuted.

### **Chronology of Paul's Training Period**

There is about a three-year gap here (between v25-26), between Saul's escape from Damascus and his arrival in Jerusalem. He spent at least two years in Arabia (Nabataea,



the wilderness just beyond Damascus; Gal 1:15-17; 1 Cor 15:1-4). Paul insisted that what he preached came directly from Jesus, not from the apostles. This revelation probably came while he was in Arabia. The Sinai desert also prepared both Moses and Elijah.

Saul later wrote that immediately following his conversion, he did not consult with others about the Scriptures, but went into Arabia—and later returned to Damascus (Gal 1:15-17). After Saul's conversion and baptism, he needed some time and space for quiet reflection and communion with God. He had to rethink the Scriptures, receive new understanding from the Lord, and revise his Pharisaic theology. So, like Moses, Elijah, and Jesus before him, he retired into the wilderness.

About 13-14 years elapsed from Saul's conversion until he and Barnabas left Antioch on their first missionary journey (Acts 13; Gal 1:16-22). Biblical references compared with known dates in secular history show three periods of time where God was preparing Saul for ministry to the Gentiles (11:28; 13:7).

1. Damascus (v20-25)
2. Arabia (Gal 1:17)
3. Damascus (Gal 1:17)
4. Jerusalem (v26-29), to meet with Peter (Gal 1:18)
5. Tarsus (v30; 22:21; Gal 1:21)

*God never uses for the great work of interpreting His Kingdom any man who has not been definitely called and spiritually trained.*

### **Saul's Reception in Jerusalem**

**26** When he came to Jerusalem, he tried *repeatedly* to associate with the disciples; and yet they were all afraid of him, as they did not believe that he was a disciple.

**26** When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

**26** When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they all were afraid of him because they wouldn't believe he was a disciple.

**26** And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

- Likely the same time period Paul later mentions in Gal 1:18-20

- The disciples were frightened of Saul at this point because either they weren't aware of his conversion, or they didn't believe his conversion was authentic

— Perhaps the fact that Saul had not sought out the apostles or other Christians in Jerusalem for three years following his conversion made the believers there suspicious

— Many of them surely were affected by his previous persecutions, some even losing friends or relatives because of Saul

— They had not met him personally, and since they were in the midst of persecution, they may have wondered if Saul began using secret methods of persecution, perhaps a “plant” by the Sanhedrin

27 But **Barnabas** took hold of him and brought him to **the apostles** and described to them how **he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him**, and how he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus at Damascus.

27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

27 Barnabas, however, introduced Saul to the apostles, telling them how on the road Saul had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how courageously he had spoken in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

- “...Barnabas” - “son of exhortation”; he was a Levite, a native of Cyprus (annexed as a Roman province, off coast of Cilicia near where Saul was born)

— His name means the “son of consolation and comfort”; both were Hellenistic Jews and eminent in their respective localities; he may have known Saul before

— When no one believed Saul, Barnabas did. Barnabas believed the testimony of Saul when none, or very few, of the other disciples did

— We don't know whether Barnabas was in Damascus with Saul, or how he came to believe Saul's conversion, but it appears that he simply accepted it by faith

— Barnabas' behavior here is consistent with what we read of him elsewhere in Acts (4:36-37; 11:22-30; 13:1-14:28; 15:2-4,12,22)

- “...the apostles” - Peter (the head of the apostles) and James (the head of the Church of Jerusalem, Gal 1:17-19); Paul wrote later that he stayed with Peter for 15 days (Gal 1:15)

— James, Jesus' half-brother, was not one of the Twelve; “apostle” here is used in the general sense

- Barnabas pointed out three indications that Saul's conversion was genuine:

- Saul had “seen the Lord”
- He had “talked with” the Lord
- He had witnessed boldly in Damascus

- “...he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him” - Barnabas highlights the fact that Saul met Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road because that was the criteria that must be met for someone to be called an apostle (Cf. 1:21-22)

## The Ministry of Saul in Jerusalem

28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

28 So he freely circulated among them in Jerusalem, speaking courageously in the name of the Lord.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

- Saul took over Stephen's work of debating the Hellenistic Jews while he was in Jerusalem

— He was a Hellenist, as Stephen was, however he described himself as "a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil 3:5; Cf. 2 Cor 11:22), which meant his beliefs were more in line with the Hebrews than with the Hellenists

— This was likely during the 15-day period that Paul later mentioned in Gal 1:18, when fear of Saul vanished from the Jerusalem church

29 And he was talking and arguing with the **Hellenistic Jews**; but they were attempting to put him to death.

29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death.

29 He kept talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews, but they were bent on murdering him.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

- "...Hellenistic *Jews*" - Jews of the *diaspora* (Cf. 6:1); many came to Pentecost and were saved, but others remained unsaved

— Saul did exactly what Stephen had done with the same group (6:9) that brought about Stephen's death, and they responded to Saul in the same way they had responded to Stephen

— Saul must have argued his point very well because these people didn't just walk away...they wanted to kill Saul (Cf. v23)

— Saul's vision (22:17-21) occurred at this point in his life, when he was told by God to leave Jerusalem

30 Now when the brothers learned *of it*, they brought him **down to Caesarea** and sent him away to **Tarsus**.

30 But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

30 When the brothers found out about the plot, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

- Saul continued to evangelize in Jerusalem until it became obvious that he must leave immediately or suffer the same death as Stephen

- A vision sends him away (22:17-21), as God wanted to use him to evangelize the Gentiles

- Saul's Christian brothers escorted him to Caesarea; we do not know how long Saul stayed there, but it likely wasn't long

- "...down to Caesarea" - perfect description of the geography if you're traveling from Jerusalem to Caesarea

- The geography of Jerusalem is on a hill, so when you travel to Jerusalem you are ascending, and when you're traveling out of Jerusalem, you're descending

- This is where the "Psalms of Ascent" (Ps 120-134) get their name, because the Jews would sing as they made their way "up" to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish feasts

- "...Tarsus" - Saul traveled there probably to tell his family and others about Jesus

- Saul stayed in Tarsus for the next 10 years (Gal 1:21). During this time is likely when Paul was taken to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1-4) and given information that man was not fit to hear. After this, to keep him humble, God gave him a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-10).

Saul remained in the province of Cilicia until Barnabas tracked him down and brought him to Syrian Antioch (11:19-26). This was some six years later. We have no record of Saul's activities during this period (probably 37-43 AD), except that many of his experiences that he described in 2 Cor 11:24-27; 12:1-9 seem to fit into these silent years. If they do, we know that Saul was active in ministry, gaining experience that prepared him for what we read he did later in Acts on his missionary journeys.

### **The Church at Peace**

**31** So the church **throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria** enjoyed peace, as it was **being built up**; and as it continued in the **fear of the Lord** and in the **comfort of the Holy Spirit**, it **kept increasing**.

**31** So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

**31** So the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed peace. As it continued to be built up and to live in the fear of the Lord, it kept increasing in numbers through the encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

**31** Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

- A progress report for the church...

- "...throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria" - geographical progress (Cf. 1:8)

- "...enjoyed peace" - Saul's conversion brought rest from persecution for the Christians in Judea, Galilee and Samaria; peaceful conditions are conducive to effective evangelism and church growth (2 Tim 2:1-4)

— This is one of ~18 "progress reports" the reader is given throughout Acts:

— Clear: 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31

— Less Clear: 1:15; 2:41; 4:4,31; 5:14,42; 8:25,40; 11:21; 13:49; 17:6

- 2:41 - 3,000 new converts added to the core group of disciples
- 2:47 - Christians added day by day
- 5:14 - multitudes of new believers added
- 6:7 - the number of disciples increased greatly
- 9:31 - the church continued to increase in numbers

— When the Spirit of God has His way in the hearts and lives of believers, unsaved people are going to be reached and won for Christ

- "...being built up" - a work of the Holy Spirit using the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the purpose of spiritual gifts is the edification of the church (1 Cor 14:26)

- "...fear of the Lord" - a respect and understanding of who He is and His ways; our heart is to submit to God's ways and understanding that His ways are higher than our ways

— When you have a "fear" of the Lord, you respect and submit to Him and His ways, your ability to acquire knowledge and wisdom is off the charts (Prov 1:7; Cf. Prov 9:10; Ps 111:10)

— Once our mind is in submission to God, it begins to operate as God originally intended it to

- "...comfort of the Holy Spirit" - providing comfort to believers is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26-27)

- "...kept increasing" - the purpose why Luke wrote this book: to demonstrate to

Theophilus the birth and growth of the church numerically, geographically, and ethnically.

### **Eight Numerical Progress Reports in Acts**

1. Acts 2:47: "...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."
2. Acts 4:4: "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."

3. Acts 6:7: "The word of God kept spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."
4. **Acts 9:31: "So the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed peace, as it was being built up; and as it continued in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it kept increasing."**
5. Acts 12:24: "But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied."
6. Acts 16:5: "So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily."
7. Acts 19:20: "So the word of the Lord was growing and prevailing mightily."
8. Acts 28:30-31: "Now Paul stayed two full years in his own rented lodging and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."

### **Peter's Ministry**

- Acts 9:32—12:25 describes Peter's ministry
- Acts 13-28 describes Paul's ministry

### **The Witness to the Uttermost Part of the Earth (Acts 9:32—28:31)**

#### **The Extension of the Church to Syrian Antioch (Acts 9:32—12:24)**

The Book of Acts shifts from the Jews (Jerusalem and Judea), to the half-Jews (the Samaritans), then to the uttermost parts of the earth (the Gentiles). This was about eight years after Pentecost. Peter, not Paul, is to be the "door opener" to the Gentiles. Had Paul been the prime mover toward uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church, the Jewish contingent, who were never friendly to him, could have acquired such strength to bring a disastrous schism in the Church.

(5) Extension of Peter's Ministry into Lydda and Joppa (9:32-43)

Peter now takes center stage in Acts, for a short time, in order to cover the opening of the kingdom to the Gentiles. In 9:15, Jesus told Paul that he would be the apostle to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, so why is Peter now center stage to do that? Because of what Jesus did in Matt 16:19...gave him the "keys to the kingdom."

Keys open doors to allow access. By giving Peter the keys to the kingdom, God allowed Peter the privilege of opening the "door" to salvation in Christ to various people-groups, including Gentiles. Once the door is open, it stays open, which later leaves room for Paul to become the Apostle to the Gentiles (v15) and preach the Gospel to them on a large scale.

**32** Now as Peter was traveling through all *those regions*, he also came down to the **saints** who lived at **Lydda**.

**32** Now as Peter was traveling through all *those regions*, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

**32** Now when Peter was going around among all of the disciples, he also visited the saints living in Lydda.

**32** And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

- Luke now returned to Peter's continuing ministry in Judea, showing the gospel was being preached effectively in a region of Palestine occupied by both Jews and Gentiles

- The apostle's ministry began to move outside of Jerusalem

- Peter followed in Philip's footsteps, perhaps to confirm Philip's ministry in Judea by apostolic authority, just as he had earlier authenticated Philip's ministry in Samaria

- "...saints" - believers; probably here due to the previous dispersion of believers from Jerusalem during the third persecution, as well as converts as a result of Philip's efforts (8:40)

- "...Lydda" - 12 miles southeast of Joppa, 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem

- Site of modern day Lod (location of Israel's international airport)

The coastal plain of Israel was the site of great highways of the ancient world. These were both the trade routes and the roads of armies which marched to and from Egypt to the south and the Mesopotamian world to the north and east. Archaeology demonstrates the presence of Gentile, especially Greek, influence.

The coastal plain always has been first to be affected by pagan influences. The Jewish residents of this area could not avoid constant contact with Gentiles. They were geographically removed from the center of Hebrew worship, the temple, and other institutions which many felt were necessary for a fully "observant" life. The more strict Jews felt they had "reasons to doubt" the kosher status (i.e., the ceremonial purity) and proper adherence to other Jewish distinctives (concepts and especially practices) by the residents of the coastal plain.

The inclusion of some coastal plain Jews into the believing community (9:32-42) probably implies some hesitancy and/or misgivings by Jerusalem Christians. The fact that there were believers in this area is first introduced by recording the presence and implied approval of none other than Peter (v23). Later, the raising of Tabitha-Dorcas from the dead provides miraculous confirmation of God's presence and acceptance of these groups.

**33** There he found a man named **Aeneas** who had been bedridden for eight years, because he was paralyzed.

**33** There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.

33 There he found a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years.

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

- "...Aeneas" - a Greek name; he was probably a Hellenistic Jew

- Peter healed another man in Lydda (Cf. 3:6-8; Luke 5:17-26)

34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and **make your own bed.**" **Immediately** he got up.

34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.

34 Peter told him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Messiah is healing you. Get up and put away your mat!" At once he got up,

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

- Peter gives glory to Jesus Christ as he instructs Aeneas to get up

— Part of the purpose of Acts is to demonstrate that, although now ascended to the Father's right hand, Jesus continues on in His ministry on the earth. He's just now doing it through the Church rather than in person.

— Jesus had also told a paralytic in Capernaum to take up his pallet and walk (Matt 9:6; Mark 2:11; Luke 5:24); He later told another paralytic at the Bethesda pool to do the same (John 5:8)

- "...make your own bed" - the Greek literally states, "spread your bed for yourself"; the implication is that others had been doing this for him for eight years, but how he could do it himself

- "...Immediately" - in Acts when God heals someone, it is instantaneous healing (Cf. 3:2;

— Other than one case in Mark's Gospel where a man was progressively healed from blindness (Mark 8:22-26), all other healings performed either by Christ in person or through the Apostles, was instantaneous

35 And **all who lived** at Lydda and **Sharon** saw him, and they **turned to** the Lord.

35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

35 and all the people who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

- "...all who lived" - all in Lydda and Sharon who heard of Peter's instant healing of a man who was paralyzed for eight years came to know Christ

- "...Sharon" - the name of the plain from Joppa to Mt Carmel; Lydda was its southeastern edge



- As with the healing of the lame temple beggar and Jesus' healings of the paralytics at Capernaum and Jerusalem, this healing resulted in many people hearing the gospel and believing in Jesus as Messiah
- One of the people affected by this healing was Cornelius, a Gentile who figures significantly in Acts 10
- "...turned" - *epistrephō*, a synonym for "believed" (v42; Cf. 1 Thess 1:9)
- "...to" - notice it doesn't mention what they turned *from*, but rather what (or "who") they turned *to*
- Turning from sin does not save anyone. If turning from sin could save someone then the Gospel is based on works.

### **Tabitha is Healed**

**36** Now in **Joppa** there was a **disciple** named **Tabitha** (which when translated means **Dorcas**); this woman was excelling in acts of kindness and charity which she did *habitually*.

**36** Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated *in Greek* is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.

**36** In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was known for her good actions and acts of charity that she was always doing.

**36** Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

- "...Joppa" - modern day Yafo, a suburb of Tel Aviv; Jonah's seaport
- "...disciple" - *mathetria*, only time in NT where feminine form of Greek word for "disciple" is used
- "...Tabitha" - Aramaic or Jewish name means "gazelle"; she was a Jewish Christian and a "disciple"
- "...Dorcas" - the Greek word for "gazelle"; this was her Greek or Gentile name
- Dorcas was not a woman who exceeded in good works when it was convenient for her...she did so "habitually"
- Dorcas was a growing/maturing believer who was making progress in the middle tense of her salvation (sanctification)
- This is what all believers are called to do (Cf. Eph 2:10; James 2:20)
- Sounds like she had the gift of helps (Cf. 1 Cor 12:28)

**37** But it happened at that time that she became sick and died; and when they had washed *her body*, they laid *it* in an upstairs room.

**37** And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.

37 At that time, she got sick and died. After they had washed her, they laid her in an upstairs room.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

- This verse destroys the Prosperity Gospel...v36 tells us that Dorcas "excelled" in good works, then she became sick and died

- Doesn't sound like Dorcas had a sin problem, but she fell sick and died well before old age

- Heb 9:27 tells that we are destined to die, and after that, judgment

- Solomon tells us in Eccl 7:2-4 that wise men attend funerals, and foolish men attend weddings because death is the final event in every person's life

- You don't think about death at a wedding, but you do think about it at a funeral. Funerals have a way of bringing the reality of death to our minds, and help us contemplate our own lives.

38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Do not delay in coming to us."

38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us."

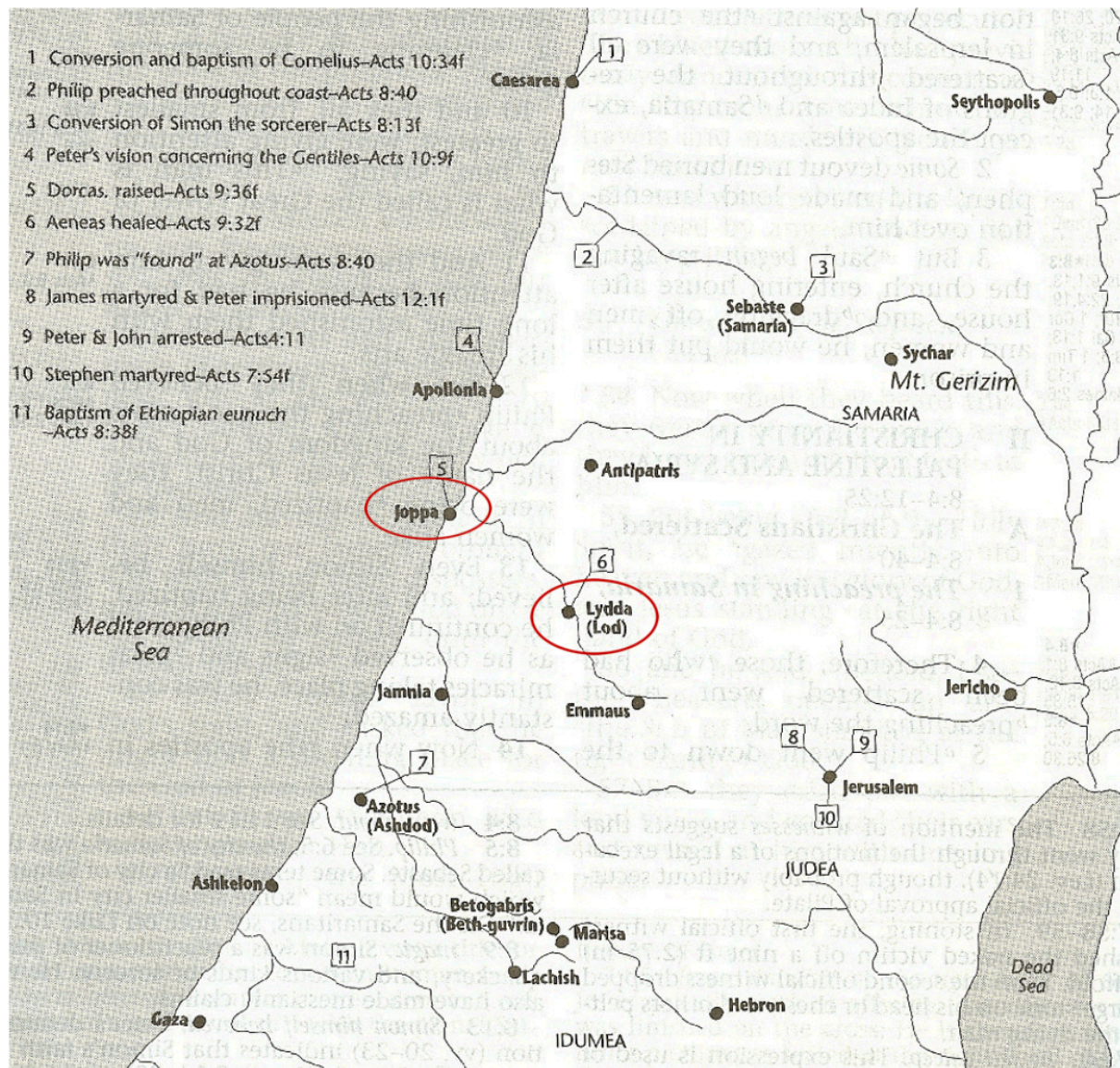
38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples heard that Peter was there and sent two men to him and begged him, "Come here quickly!"

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

- Her death while Peter was in Lydda caused great distress

- The disciples knew that Peter was in Joppa because he just healed Aeneas, who was sick for eight years (v33-34)

- They apparently expected Peter to come and raise her back to life, since they "washed her body" and "laid her in an upper room"



39 So Peter got ready and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the room upstairs; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and **showing** all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

39 So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

39 So Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they took him upstairs. All the widows gathered around Peter, crying and showing him all the shirts and coats Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and

garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

- "...showing" - middle voice; suggests that the widows were wearing the clothing Tabitha made for them; this seemed to be her ministry

— It appears sewing was Tabitha's spiritual gift...

40 But Peter **sent them all out** and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "**Tabitha, arise.**" And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

40 Peter made them all go outside. After kneeling down, he prayed, turned to the body, and said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

- "...sent them all out" - Peter cleared the room and isolated himself with Dorcas

— This is the same thing Jesus did in Mark 5:40-41 when He healed Jairus' daughter

— Luke is likely trying to demonstrate to Theophilus that the miracles performed by the apostles are still the miracles of Jesus. The difference is that Jesus is not performing the miracles in person here on earth, but doing so from heaven.

- "...Tabitha, arise" - Peter's procedure was nearly identical to Jesus' when He raised Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:40)

— There is only one letter difference in what Peter said HERE (*Tabitha qumi*) and what Jesus said when He raised Jairus' daughter (*Talitha qumi*), lit. "Little girl, get up"; Cf. Mark 5:41; Luke 8:51-56

— This miracle was another evidence of Jesus' working powerfully through His witnesses in word and deed (1:1-2; Cf. John 14:12)

— Jesus had given the Twelve the power to raise the dead (Matt 10:8)

— Christ raised from the dead only on three occasions:

1. Jairus' daughter
2. Widow of Nain's son
3. Lazarus

41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

41 He extended his hand and helped her get up. Then he called the saints, including the widows, and gave her back to them alive.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

- It's important to note that other believers were around Dorcas while and after she died, but none of them performed the miracle

— In Acts, only the apostles and their delegates (i.e. Stephen, a deacon) perform signs and wonders (Cf. 2 Cor 12:12)

42 It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

42 It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

42 What happened became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

- Sometimes miracles produce faith, but you have to be careful about that

— The Exodus generation saw many miracles, yet it did not produce faith in them

— There is a view in Christianity today called "Power Evangelism." It believes in the Already/Not Yet view of the kingdom, and since we're in a partial form of the kingdom now, any gospel presentation must be accompanied by a sign/wonder.

— The problem is, that's nowhere found in Scripture. There may be examples of it, such as the resuscitation of Dorcas here followed by people getting saved, but it's by no means the norm in the early church or today.

— One (of the many) problems with this view is that it discounts the power of God's Word and the Gospel (Cf. Is 55:10-11; Jer 23:29; Luke 16:27-31; Rom 10:17; 2 Tim 3:15; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23)

43 And *Peter* stayed in Joppa many days with **a tanner** *named* Simon.

43 And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon.

43 Meanwhile, Peter stayed in Joppa for several days with Simon, a leatherworker.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

- "...a tanner" - tanning was an abhorrent profession to the Jews as it deals with contact with dead animals, blood, etc.

— According to the Mosaic Law, this practice was unclean (Cf. Lev 11:39-40)

— By having Peter stay at the home of a tanner, God is slowly and gently breaking Peter away from the Mosaic Law (Cf. Rom 6:14; 2 Cor 3:7-11)

— The weaning away of Peter's legalism began here, and will continue through Acts 10 as God uses him to bring the first Gentile believer to Christ